

**James Madison to Edmund Randolph, May 28, 1782.
Partly in Cipher. Transcription: The Writings of James
Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's
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TO EDMUND RANDOLPH.¹

1 From the Madison Papers (1840).

Philadelphia, May 28, 1782.

Dear Sir, —A letter from Dr. Franklin, of the fourth March, informs the Superintendent of Finance that the Court of France had granted an aid of six millions of livres to the United States for the present year. It appears, however, that this aid has been wholly anticipated, as well as the aids of the last year, by bills of exchange; by supplies for the army, particularly those in Holland; by the debt of Beaumarchais, amounting to two millions and a half of livres; by the interest money; by the deduction on account of Virginia, computed at seven hundred thousand livres, &c. The States must, therefore, by some means or other, supply the demands of Congress, or a very serious crisis must ensue. After the differences between the modes of feeding the army by contracts and by the bayonet have been experienced both by the army and the people, a recurrence to the latter cannot be too much dreaded.

The Province of Friesland has instructed its Delegates in the States General to concur in a public reception of Mr. Adams. The city of Dort

has done the same to theirs in the Provincial Assembly of Holland.

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The above letter came by the Alliance, which is arrived at Rhode Island. Captain Barry, I am told, says that the Marquis will come with a squadron for the American coast, which was equipping. If this be true, Barry is wrong in disclosing it. I distrust it.

A French cutter is since arrived, after a short passage, with despatches for the Minister here. He received them on Saturday by an express from Salem, and has not yet communicated their contents to Congress. I understand, through the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, that the Court of London has lately proposed to the Court of France a separate peace, as the price of which she would place Dunkirk in its former state, make some sacrifices in the East Indies, and accede to a *status quo* in the West Indies. The answer of France was dictated by her engagements with the United States. This insidious step taken at the same moment with the agency of Mr. Carleton, will, I hope, not long be withheld from the public. We have heard nothing from this gentleman since the answer to his request of a passport for his secretary.

In order to explain our public affairs to the States, and to urge the necessity of complying with the requisitions of Congress, we have determined to depute two members to visit the Eastern States, and two the Southern. The first are Root and Montgomery; the others, Rutledge and Clymer. I put this in cypher, because secrecy has been enjoined by Congress. The deputation will probably set off in a few days.

I find that the Minister of France has been informed, by some correspondent in Virginia, that the late intelligence from Britain has produced very unfavorable symptoms in a large party. He seems not a little discomposed at it. The honor of the State concurred with my own persuasion in dictating a consolatory answer to him. For this reason, as well as for others, I think it would be expedient for the Legislature to enter into an unanimous declaration on this point. Other States are doing this, and such a mode of announcing the sense of the people may be regarded as more authentic than a declaration from Congress.

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The best form, I conceive, will be that of an instruction to the Delegates. Do not fail to supply me with accurate and full information on the whole subject of this paragraph.

A letter from Dr. Franklin, of thirtieth of March, enclosing a copy of one to him from Mr. Adams, at the Hague, was laid before Congress subsequently to writing the above. By these, it appears not only that an essay has been made on the fidelity of France to the alliance, but that the pulse of America has been at the same time separately felt through each of those Ministers. They both speak with becoming indignation on the subject, attest the firmness of our ally, and recommend decisive efforts for expelling the enemy from our country. Mr. Adams says, 'ten or eleven cities of Holland have declared themselves in favor of American Independence, and it is expected that to-day or to-morrow this Province will take the decisive resolution of admitting me to my audience. Perhaps some of the other Provinces may delay it for three or four weeks, but the Prince has declared that he has no hopes of resisting the torrent, and, therefore, that he shall not attempt it. The Duke de la Vauguyon has acted a very friendly and honorable part in this business, without, however, doing any ministerial act in it.' What was said above of Friesland came from Mr. Barclay, the Consul. Mr. Adams says nothing of that Province, although his letter is of later date.

The Secretary of War has just given notice to Congress, that the Department of Finance is unable to supply the essential means of opening the campaign. This shocks, rather than surprises, us. It will be one article in the communications of the deputies above mentioned, and adds force to the expediency of their mission.

The denial to Congress of the right of granting flags is singular indeed. May not the power of Congress to agree to a truce be contested on the same grounds? The former is a partial truce, and if the silence of the Confederation reserves it to the States, the same silence reserves the latter. Admitting that Congress had the right of granting flags, was it not exercised to the advantage of Virginia in procuring a vent to her staple, and stopping the exportation of her specie?

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